

# GUNSTON HALL PLANTATION

## **Probate Inventory Database**

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**The Board of Regents of Gunston Hall Plantation**  
of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America

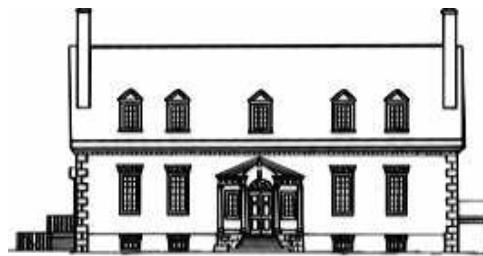
and

**The Chipstone Foundation**  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

## OVERVIEW

Researchers at Gunston Hall Plantation, the colonial home of George Mason (1725-1792), have collected 325 probate inventories from the Chesapeake region of Maryland and Virginia for the period of 1740 to 1810. Under the auspices of The Board of Regents of Gunston Hall Plantation, these inventories have been transcribed and the household items entered into a searchable database. Through a grant from the Chipstone Foundation, this database and the transcriptions are being made available to the public.

The purpose of this instruction manual is to provide a survey of the possibilities for searching the database. For greater detail, you are urged to consult the User Manual which can be printed from the website.



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## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Microsoft Access 2000 or greater  
Adobe Acrobat Reader

## DOWNLOAD

Click the download link on the main probate webpage [www.gunstonhall.org/probate/index.html](http://www.gunstonhall.org/probate/index.html) or enter [www.gunstonhall.org/probate/probatedisk.zip](http://www.gunstonhall.org/probate/probatedisk.zip) into your browser.

## INSTALLATION

- 1- Close all open programs.
- 2- Click the downloaded setup.exe file. This installs the Probate Inventory Database application.
- 3- Click OK, then follow the directions on the screen. It is highly recommended that you accept all of the defaults during installation. This places the database and the inventory transcription files in the folder C:\Program Files\probate.

## STARTING THE GUNSTON HALL PROBATE INVENTORY DATABASE

To start the Gunston Hall Probate Inventory Database, click the Start button on the Windows task bar, select Programs and then Gunston Hall Probate Inventory Database from the task list. The Main Menu screen will appear. This menu provides the following options:

**MAIN TABLE FORM:**

Use this form to view or modify data about an individual decedent or his probate inventory.

**DETAIL TABLE FORM:**

For viewing or modifying the information about the items enumerated in the probate inventory.

**REPORTS:**

For searching the database and printing the results of the searches.

**SETUP FOR TRANSCRIPTION FILES:**

This provides the ability to modify the pointer to the transcription files. This is only required when the files are not installed in the recommended default location.

**QUIT:**

This button will end the Gunston Hall Probate Inventory Database application.

It is suggested that you click on each of these options, in turn, to display the various forms. Detailed on-line help can be displayed by pressing the F1 key from any field in each form to display the purpose of that particular field.

## DATABASE LAYOUT

The database consists of two tables. The first, MAIN, refers to an individual inventory and contains an overview of that inventory. There is one MAIN entry for each inventory in the database. The DETAIL table contains information on each of the items in an inventory. Therefore, the DETAIL table consists of many entries for each inventory. These tables are linked via a common element, the FILENAME, a shortened combination of the name of the decedent and the relevant date, i.e.: WSHGTN99. A complete description of the database layout is contained in the User Manual, found on the website.

## REPORTS

Reports is the component of the database that you will be using most. It is through the reports that you will find the varied information available in the database and become familiar with its structure. The content of the report is viewed and may be printed, if so desired.

There are several built in reports in the system enabling the user to find items either singularly or in combination with other items in the database. These reports allow viewing prior to actual printing. The report is dependent upon the filters selected to display records. The filters are extremely powerful and flexible, allowing an unlimited combination of search criteria.

Application of the filters can be confusing when first attempted, therefore, it is strongly suggested that you take the time to go through the following exercises in this booklet before you begin to build your own filters.

The variety of reports provided allows the use of the MAIN or DETAIL table fields or a combination of the MAIN and DETAIL table fields. F1 provides information about the content of each report from the Report Menu. Take time to browse the Report Menu, using the F1 key.

## CLASS

For the purposes of the Gunston Hall Room Use Study, all inventories in the database have been assigned a social class, reflecting the number and type of tablewares listed in the inventory. The classes are: elite (e), aspiring (a), decent (d) and old fashioned, (of). For a complete description of the method used and meaning of these distinctions, see the website for: User Manual - Main Table Data Elements or Furnishings Plan - Methodology and Process.

## SEARCHING AND PRINTING

Approximately two hours of your time, spent doing the following exercises, will reward you with ease in building reports for your specific needs. You may stop at the completion of any exercise by clicking Close, then click Return to Main Menu. Each of the following exercises or examples stand-alone.

Successful searches start with the type of object you are looking for.

Search for "chairs" in the database:

- 1- Start the Gunston Hall Probate Inventory Database.
- 2- From the Main Menu, click Reports.
- 3- Click Detail Inventory Report (in this report, you are able to choose from any of the fields listed in the Detail Inventory Table)
- 4- Click Build Filter.
- 5- Scroll to and double click TYPE in the "qry . . ." box. (This box will always start with "qry" and include the type of report you have chosen, i.e., qryMain or qryDetail, etc.)
- 6- Enter chair\* in the Criteria field. (The asterisk is a wild card enabling the computer to find any chair in the type field whether or not it has attached designators, - or =.)
- 7- Click Apply Filter.
- 8- Take time to look at the first 25 records. -- See how the database is put together. See how the appraisers' descriptions of each chair fit into the various fields in the database.

NOTE: By combining any of the fields from the Main Inventory Table or the Detail Inventory Table you will be able to run increasingly more complicated searches.

## TIPS

- 1- Remember not finding something also gives you information.
- 2- Start with the broadest search and refine it to the least number of items.
- 3- Spell the beginning of the word and use the wild card (\*), i.e., barom\* for barometer.
- 4- There are times when you search for a word and that word simply does not appear in the database. At the end of these exercises you will find instructions on running a word search in the List of Entries to ensure that the word has been used in the database. For example - Harp and harpoon do not appear but harpsichord does.

## MISSING BUTTONS

If at any time the buttons to Build and Apply Filter at the bottom of the Filter Form do not appear, click the Restore Window button on the gray tool bar. It is the one with two overlapping boxes, between the boxes with the flat line \_ and the X.

## PREVIEWING AND PRINTING YOUR REPORTS

One of the features of the Probate Inventory Database is that you have two opportunities to view your report before you

print, or you may choose not to print it. With the exception of one of the following examples you will not print reports in these exercises, but will view the results on your monitor. You, however, may choose to print any report by following the print instructions below.

After viewing the individual screens for the items you have selected

- 1- Click Run Report.
- 2- Enter a title for your report when prompted for the Report Header.
- 3- Click OK.
- 4- The report is shown as it will print giving you a chance to preview the contents.
- 5- If this is what you want to print, go to File in the gray tool bar.
- 6- Scroll to Print and Click.
- 7- To return to the filter screen either before or after printing, Click Close under File in gray tool bar.
- 8- To close this particular report, Click Close.
- 9- Click Return to Main Menu.

## **EXERCISES**

An interesting and rewarding exercise is to add one letter at a time to the search criteria in the Type field.

From Main Menu, Click Reports.

Click Detail Inventory Report.

Click Build Filter.

From qry (query) box, double click TYPE.

Type in T\* in the Criteria field.

(The asterisk is the wild card, allowing anything that follows the T to be displayed in the report.)

Click Apply Filter. Scroll through the first 25 results, by using either “PgDn” key or clicking the forward arrow by the number of records displayed.

Click Build Filter.

Add an A to the Criteria, i.e., TA\*

(Be sure to insert the A before the \* and the closing quotation: Like “TA\*”)

Click Apply Filter, look at the first 25 results.

Click Build Filter.

Add a B to the Criteria, i.e., “TAB\*”

Click Apply Filter, look at the first 25 results.

Click Build Filter.

Delete the B and insert N before the \* and within the closing quotation, i.e., “TAN\*”

Click Apply Filter, look at the first 10 results.

Note: Try this exercise with several different letters and several different fields, particularly CATEGORY, SUB\_CATEG, MATERIAL, and COLOR to see how the database is defined.

When you are finished Click Close.

Click Return to Main Menu.

## TO BUILD SEARCHES FOR A REPORT

### EXAMPLE A - Barometer

- 1- Go to the Main Menu of the database.
- 2- Click Reports.
- 3- Click Detail Inventory Report (this report enables you to choose from any of the fields listed in the Detail Inventory Table).
- 4- Click Build Filter.
- 5- Scroll to and double click TYPE in the qry box.
- 6- Enter barom\* (\* is the wild card) in the Criteria field. The system will convert barom\* to LIKE “barom\*”.
- 7- Click Apply Filter.
- 8- You will notice that with a specialized item like this you will find only a few entries eliminating the need for further filtering.
- 9- Click Close to return to the Reports Menu.

### EXAMPLE B - Chairs

- 1- Go to the Reports Menu of the database.
- 2- Click Expanded Report (with this report you will be able to choose from any of the fields listed in the Main or Detail Inventory Tables and you will see an entry for the individuals having these items, combining information from each of these tables.)
- 3- Click Build Filter.
- 4- Scroll to and double click TYPE in the qry box.
- 5- Enter chair\* (\* is the wild card) in the Criteria field.
- 6- Click Apply Filter.
- 7- Your results will number over 2,000 entries for Chair. Take time to look at the first 25 results, by using either “PgDn” key or clicking the forward arrow by the number of records displayed. You will see that Chair appears with the Categories: Furniture and Travel.
- 8- Click Build Filter.
- 9- Scroll to and double click CATEGORY.
- 10- Enter Furniture in the Criteria field.
- 11- Click Apply Filter. Look at the first 25 results.

But you really want to find walnut chairs.

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- Scroll to and double click MATERIAL from the qry box.
- 3- Enter wal\* in the Criteria field. (Always use the beginning of the word and wild card asterisk \*.)  
At this point your filter includes:  
Type: chair\*; Category: furniture; Material: wal\*
- 4- Click Apply Filter. Look at the first 25 results.

Is this what you are looking for or do you want to add another MATERIAL filter to include mahogany and black walnut chairs as well?

- 1- Click Build Filter
- 2- Change the MATERIAL criteria to read: \*wal\* or mahog\* (By placing the wild card \* both before and after the word, you are expanding the search to find any place in the field where that word is located. The program will now find wal[nut] to any position where wal[nut] appears in the MATERIAL field. You have also expanded your search to include any mahog[any] chairs — Your search will result in all walnut, black walnut (blk wal), or mahogany chairs.)
- 3- Click Apply Filter. Look at the results.

Now find only mahogany chairs in the parlor.

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- Go to the Criteria for MATERIAL filter.
- 3- Delete Like “\*wal\*” and the word OR — leaving only Like “mahog\*” in the Criteria field.
- 4- Go to the qry box, scroll to and double click LOCATION.
- 5- In the Criteria for LOCATION insert the first three letters of the word parlor with wild cards, “\*par\*”. The wild card both before and after, i.e., \*par\* instructs the computer to filter for par wherever it appears in the LOCATION field.
- 6- Click Apply Filter.
- 7- Look at your results.

To make it even more interesting, filter for elite inventories.

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- Go to the qry box, scroll to and double click CLASS. (Remember the filter you are looking for may be before the last filter you used.)
- 3- Enter e\* in the Criteria field. (The wild card is used to find all of the elite inventories.)
- 4- Click Apply Filter.
- 5- Look at your results. The range of selected items is smaller.

At this point you want to see how many elite women's inventories in the database list mahogany chairs in the parlor.

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- Go to the qry box, scroll to and double click FEMALE.
- 3- Enter Y (for yes) in the Criteria field.
- 4- Click Apply Filter.
- 5- You have a blank screen. You have just found out that no elite women have mahogany chairs in their parlor. You will start eliminating Criteria.
- 6- Click Build Filter.
- 7- Go to Class - delete the field.
- 8- Click Apply Filter. Look at your results.

Your search is now for Mahogany Chairs owned by women in the Parlor.

Still no results?

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- Go to LOCATION - delete the field.
- 3- Click Apply Filter.
- 4- Look at your results.

Your search is now for Mahogany Chairs owned by women

Still too restricted?

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- Go to MATERIAL - delete the field.
- 3- Click Apply Filter. You are now searching for chairs owned by women.
- 4- Look at your results.

Do other materials appear? Other locations? What is the predominate class represented?

- 5- Click Close.
- 6- Click Return to Main Menu.

NOTE: You have completed a very thorough search and changed some of your search Criteria during the process. Starting with a large report, you have refined it to smaller and then went on to a somewhat different search for larger findings.

### **EXAMPLE C - Bohea Tea in Maryland.**

- 1- Go to the Main Menu of the database.
- 2- Click Reports.
- 3- Click Expanded Report (you will choose from any of the fields listed in the Main or Detail Inventory Tables and you will see an entry for the individuals having these items, combining information from each of these tables.)
- 4- Click Build Filter.
- 5- Scroll to and double click Material in the qry box.
- 6- Enter tea\* (\* is the wild card) in the Criteria field and hit Enter.
- 7- Double click STATE in the qry box.
- 8- Enter MD in the Criteria box and hit Enter.
- 9- Double click DESCRIPT.
- 10- Enter “\*boh\*” in the Criteria field. (The \* wild card, before and after the abbreviation boh, will filter for boh wherever it appears in the DESCRIPT field.) Hit Enter.
- 11- Click Apply Filter.

NOTE: You have completed a search without using Category, Sub\_Categ, or Type.

Print this report.

- 1- Click Run Report.
- 2- A Report Header screen will appear. You may use either the criteria as defined in your search, any other title you choose, or you may leave the space blank.  
Type in: Bohea Tea in Maryland Inventories (This title will be printed on the top of your report)
- 3- Click OK.
- 4- The Report is shown in a linear format rather than the single record on the monitor which is usually shown.
- 5- Does this report contain the information you want? If you need to modify it, go to FILE in the gray tool bar at the top of the screen and scroll down to Close and Click. Should you choose to print, go to FILE in the gray tool bar at the top of the screen. Scroll down to Print and Click.
- 6- To return to the filter screen, click Close under File in the gray tool bar at the top of your screen.
- 7- You are now ready to either add to your previous report, build a new one, or close the program. If you choose to modify, before you print, Click Build Filter, make your changes and then Click Apply Filter.
- 8- When all steps are completed, Click Close
- 9- Click Return to Main Menu.

### **EXAMPLE D - Silver teapots in counties that border the Potomac.**

- 1- Go to the Main Menu of the database.
- 2- Click Reports.
- 3- Click CHRONO/DETAIL REPORT (you will be able to choose from any of the fields listed in the Main or Detail Table, but you will only see the complete entry for the item from the Detail Inventory Table. This report is shorter than the Expanded Report and is in chronological order.)
- 4- Click Build Filter.
- 5- Scroll to and double click TYPE in the qry box.
- 6- Enter pot\* in the Criteria box.
- 7- Click Apply Filter.  
Your filter will show over 2,800 pots, listing every pot in the database. Take time to look at the first 25 results and see how items are entered. Pay particular attention to the CATEGORY and SUB\_CATEG.
- 8- Click Build Filter.
- 9- Scroll to and double click SUB\_CATEG in the qry box.
- 10- Enter Tea in the Criteria field. Hit Enter.
- 11- Scroll to and double click DESCRIPT in the qry box.
- 12- Enter \*tea\* in the Criteria field. (The wild card \* before and after the word will find that word in any position in the

DESCRIPT Field.)

By entering \*tea\* you are eliminating all of the other types of pots that are listed in the Beverage-Tea CATEGORY and SUB\_CATEG, including sugar, cream, and milk. Hit Enter.

- 13- Double click MATERIAL in the qry box.
- 14- Enter Silv\* (\* is the wild card) in the Criteria field. Hit Enter.
- 15- Scroll to and double click POTOMAC in the qry box.
- 16- Enter Y in the Criteria field. This will give you the results in all counties bordering the Potomac River. Hit Enter.
- 17- Click Apply Filter. Look at the results.

NOTE: At any step in the above process you are able to stop and check to see the results of your filter by clicking Apply Filter.

Continue with your search of tea pots by looking only at those in inventories taken on or after January 1, 1790.

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- Double click DATE TAKEN in the qry box.
- 3- Enter >12/31/1789 (Meaning any taken after December 31, 1789). The computer will automatically enter # before and after the date.
- 4- Click Apply Filter. Look at the results.

To make the date more specific, look for the silver tea pots recorded in the Potomac Counties between January 1, 1760 and December 31, 1789.

- 1- Click Build Filter.
- 2- In the Date Taken filter, delete the date and insert: Between 12/31/1759 and 1/1/1790.
- 3- Click Apply Filter. Look at the results.

Change your search to find sugar or cream or milk or tea pots. You are still searching only for those made of silver.

- 1- Click Build Filter
- 2- In DESCRIPT field, delete previous entry, and insert: \*sugar\* or \*cream\* or \*milk\* or \*tea\*.
- 3- Click Apply Filter. Look at the results.

You have now found the silver tea pots or silver cream pots or silver sugar pots or silver milk pots listed in inventories taken in counties bordering the Potomac River from January 1, 1760 thru December 31, 1789.

Refine your search to look for:

Women - (FEMALE- Y) or Aspiring - (CLASS- A\*)

NOTE: You are now prepared to enter your own searches and to refine them. If you get no results from your searches, look at your filters. Delete the most restrictive filters, one at a time until results are shown.

## TIPS

- 1- Remember not finding something also gives you information.
  - A- Are you using a twentieth century word?
  - B- Is the item just not there?
  - C- Did you use the wild card (\*)?
  - D- Did you spell the item correctly? - resolve that by using only the first several letters of the word with the wild card (\*).
  - E- Is your search string so restrictive that you have excluded items that might be there by making the search too finite? If so, go back to the filter and remove the Criteria filters one at a time until you have results. Then rebuild the filter one deleted criteria at a time.
- 2- Start with the broadest search and refine it to the least number of items.

- 3- Spell the beginning of the word and use the wild card (\*). i.e., barom\* for barometers or harp\* for harpsichords.  
Use the List of Entries to find the abbreviations for some of the colors or materials in the database.
- 4- When looking for a specific word in the Description or Memo field, use the wild card \* before and after that word, i.e., \*cream\* when looking for items defined by the word cream like cream pots.
- 5- The more you use the database, the more short-cuts you will discover on your own. Try different combinations.

## **SEARCH THE LIST OF ENTRIES**

The List of Entries, or Nomenclature, included on the website, may be searched by using the FIND capabilities of the Adobe Acrobat Reader program. The Reader Guide, found under the Acrobat Reader Help, provides guidance on the use of this process. All the words or abbreviations used in Category, Sub-Category, Type, Color, and Material are included. It is easily printed from the website.

## **ADVANCED SEARCHES**

For more advanced searches, consult the Gunston Hall Probate **Inventory User Manual**:  
<http://www.gunstonhall.org/probate/manual.pdf>.